

b. By FELIX BARKER, *Director, Division of Special Education*

In 1947, the General Assembly of North Carolina recognized the need for the education of children with physical and mental handicaps by enacting Chapter 818 of the Public School Laws. This law lays the foundation for the establishment of a state-wide program of Special Education. An amendment to this law by the 1949 Legislature authorized the State Board of Education to provide, from funds available for public schools, for a program of Special Education as provided for in the Special Education law in accordance with such rules and regulations as the State Board might prescribe. Since that time, the state has been expanding its program of public education to provide for children with physical and mental limitations.

As we attempt to establish a program of Special Education within the framework of this legislation, every effort is being made to co-ordinate our services with the total program. It is our thinking that Special Education must be a part of the regular program of the public schools; it has too many problems in common with general elementary and secondary education to justify its standing apart from these.

Special education, or the education of children with physical and mental limitations in our public schools, refers to those special instructional services provided for the child who deviates from an accepted pattern of normality, either physically or mentally, to the extent that he requires services different from or in addition to those provided for the so-called average child in the regular classroom.

For educational purposes exceptional children have been classified into the following categories: physically handicapped, mentally retarded, or severely disturbed. The physically handicapped may be subdivided into the following groups: the crippled, the partially seeing, the hard of hearing, the defective in speech, and those with health problems resulting from cardiac conditions, epilepsy, tuberculosis, diabetes, and other diseases.

The following are some of the ways in which Special Education is being provided in North Carolina:

1. Special classes or centers for severely crippled children, with the children being transported in specially equipped station wagons, small buses and taxis to specially equipped ground-level classrooms;
2. Instruction of children confined to their homes because of a physical handicap, or during a long period of convalescence with school-to-home electrical teaching devices in connection with a visiting teacher for the homebound;